

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----101252 111834Z /41

R 111728Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7150
INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 13394

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PBOR, UK, BX
SUBJECT: BRITISH RELATIONS WITH BRUNEI

REFERENCE: KUALA LUMPUR 4878

SUMMARY: THE BRITISH HAVE INFORMED THE SULTAN OF
BRUNEI THAT THEY WISH TO WORK OUT A NEW TREATY RELA-
TIONSHIP IN WHICH BRUNEI WOULD BE AN "UNAMBIGUOUSLY IN-
DEPENDENT STATE". THE SULTAN HAS RESISTED THE PROPOSAL.
THE BRITISH PLAN TO INSIST ON A NEW DEFENSE AND POLITI-
CAL AGREEMENT. END SUMMARY

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF AUGUST 11 SIMONS. HEAD
OF FCO SOUTH EAST ASIA DEPARTMENT. BRIEFED EMBOFF ON
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN BRITISH RELATIONS WITH BRUNEI.
SIMONS HAD HEARD OF THE BERNAMA REPORT OF JULY 25
(REFTEL), AND INFORMED US THAT ACCORDING TO FIELD RE-
PORTING THE SOURCE OF THE STORY WAS RAMON YAACUB, CHIEF
MINISTER OF SARAWAK. HIS OBJECTIVE WAS TO HELP
SECURE A NEW AGREEMENT.

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2. SIMONS SAID YAACUB'S ACTION WOULD HAVE BEEN TAKEN
IN PURSUANCE OF THE MALAYSIAN POLICY OF DOING NOTHING
TO MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE UK AND BRUNEI TO REACH
A NEW AGREEMENT. THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN
TAKING A SERIES OF STEPS TO ATTEMPT TO DEFUSE THE IN-
ERADICABLE SUSPICION OF MALAYSIA'S INTENTIONS ON THE

PART OF SIR OMAR, FATHER OF THE SULTAN OF BRUNEI. IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS POLICY, THERE HAVE BEEN VISITS FROM SARAWAK TO BRUNEI, DETENTION IN MALAYSIA OF 32 BRUNEI DISSIDENTS WHO RETURNED FROM INSURGENCY TRAINING IN LIBYA, AND A GOM OFFER TO RETURN TO BRUNEI 4 DEFECTORS FROM THE ROYAL BRUNEI MALAY REGIMENT. THE GOM HAS ALSO ATTEMPTED TO PLAY DOWN SPEECHES BY ANTI-BRUNEI DISSIDENTS IN THE UN AND NON-ALIGNED MEETINGS.

3. THE UK' MEANWHILE' CONTINUES TO WANT TO GET THE BRUNEI PROBLEM OFF ITS BACK BECAUSE EVERY YEAR THE UK GETS HAMMERED OVER IT IN THE UN DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE OF 24. FURTHERMORE, THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF A BRITISH GURKHA BATTALION IN BRUNEI IS INCONSISTENT WITH BRITISH "EAST OF SUEZ" POLICY, AND IN ANY CASE THE BRITISH DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE SULTANATE'S SECURITY IS DEPENDENT ON THAT BATTALION.

4. WHEN THE SULTAN AND HIS FATHER VISITED LONDON FOR THE JUBILEE IN JUNE, THEY COULD NO LONGER STALL OFF DISCUSSIONS WITH HMG ON THE LATTER'S DESIRE TO CHANGE THE FORM OF THE UK-BRUNEI RELATIONSHIP. DISCUSSIONS TOOK PLACE ON JUNE 9. THE BRITISH WANT TO WITHDRAW THE GURKHA BATTALION AND REPLACE THE DEFENSE ARRANGEMENTS UNDER WHICH IT HAS BEEN STATIONED IN BRUNEI.

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5. ACCORDINGLY, THE BRITISH INFORMED THE SULTAN AND HIS FATHER THAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO WORK OUT A NEW TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION. THE BRITISH WOULD CONTINUE TO MAKE AVAILABLE INDIVIDUAL BRITISH MILITARY PERSONNEL--IF NECESSARY MORE THAN THE PRESENT 106 BRITISH LOANED SERVICE PERSONNEL. HOWEVER, UNDER THE NEW ARRANGEMENT THE SULTAN WOULD BE HEAD OF AN "UNAMBIGUOUSLY INDEPENDENT STATE." THE BRITISH WOULD HELP OUT IN THE FOREIGN RELATIONS FIELD IN ANY AGREED WAY THAT WOULD BE USEFUL, INCLUDING SOME STAFFING. THE BRITISH ALSO PROPOSED A SEPARATE NEW DEFENSE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UK AND AN INDEPENDENT BRUNEI TO FACILITATE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LATTER'S DEFENSES. THE BRITISH OBJECTIVE WOULD BE TO HELP THE SULTAN INTEGRATE HIS GOVERNMENT INTO THE WORLD COMMUNITY. THE BRITISH ARGUED THAT THE SULTAN'S SECURITY IS DEPENDENT ON RECOGNITION BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY RATHER THAN ON THE GURKHA BATTALION. IT IS THE TOTAL PERSONAL CONTROL OF THE SULTAN AND HIS FATHER OVER BRUNEI'S INTERNAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS WITHOUT DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES WHICH PRODUCES THE KIND OF INTERNAL

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SITUATION IN WHICH DISSIDENTS FLOURISH.

6. WHEN THIS PRESENTATION WAS MADE TO THE SULTAN, HE REPLIED THAT HE WANTS THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE UK TO CONTINUE FOR THE NEXT 10 OR 15 YEARS, SINCE BRUNEI IS STILL UNABLE TO STAND ON ITS OWN FEET. THE BRITISH THEREUPON TOLD HIM THAT UNLESS THERE IS SOME INDICATION OF PROGRESS TOWARDS A NEW AGREEMENT OR CONSIDERATION OF THE UK PROPOSALS, THE UK WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER ABROGATING THE PRESENT TREATY.

7. SIMONS TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE PRESENT TREATY HAS NO PROVISION FOR ABROGATION, BUT PROVIDES FOR "REVIEW", AND THE BRITISH CONSIDER THAT THE "REVIEW" HAS BEEN UNDER WAY SINCE JANUARY 1976. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, A CASE COULD BE MADE OUT FOR SAYING THAT EVERY EFFORT HAD BEEN MADE TO RENEGOTIATE THE TREATY, AND AT SOME STAGE THE BRITISH COULD LET THE SULTAN KNOW THAT THEY CONSIDER THEMSELVES RELIEVED OF OBLIGATIONS UNDER IT.

8. THE BRITISH HAVE NOW SENT ANOTHER MESSAGE TO THE
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SULTAN AND THE BALL IS IN HIS COURT. THE BRITISH BELIEVE THAT ULTIMATELY THE SULTAN WILL PROVE DETERMINED NOT TO HAVE A BREAK WITH UK.

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